Understanding Notation, Shorthand, & Slang In Bridge

 If you struggle in understanding the various bridge articles posted on the internet, then it is all too likely that you cannot appreciate what the article is saying due to a lack of understanding as to how it is said. Only with this knowledge can you go on to understand the many excellent articles out there (or perhaps misunderstand them for other reasons).

1. Hand Diagrams

The standard hand diagram is laid out as follows:



Other cruder variants include:

983

Q643

J54

QT5

A62 J743

975 KJT

A93 KQ72

A983 64

KQT

A82

T86

KJ72

Some are even more lazily laid out. Usually those articles aren’t worth reading. You may notice that the 10 is notated as T.

In both cases, the top most hand is assumed to be North’s. The suits are assumed to be spades, hearts, diamonds and clubs (from highest to lowest). Sometimes vulnerability and dealer are omitted, as in the second example. This is the backbone of what hand records are made of.

In some posts, only one hand will be given. The same order of suits is assumed. So

AKQ

AQJ

KQJT

JT9

Is the same as

♠AKQ ♥ AQJ ♦KQJT ♣JT9

Which is the same as

AKQ AQJ KQJT JT9

Another important thing to note is that sometimes an author would like to distinguish a hand pattern from a specific hand. It is common for

(7321)

To refer to any hand with a 7 card suit, a 3 card suit, a doubleton and a singleton. However, a

7-3-2-1

Suggests precisely 7♠ 3♥ 2♦ 1♣

If an author deviates from this, they usually have a note to that effect in the beginning.

1. Bidding Diagrams

Like hand diagrams, bidding diagrams come in many flavors. The standard looks something like:



It is clear who is bidding what. Progression of the auction starts at the top and works from left to right. The little numerical superscripts can designate further information about the calls.

Some other shorthand methods include

1♠ 2♣; 2N; 3♣… 7♣

In which the semicolon indicates a round of bidding has passed. The auction is “constructive” (no opposing bidding) due to the lack of parentheses. If the auction was instead:

1♠ (2♥) X (P)

It would be understood that dealer opened 1♠, his LHO overcalled 2♥, his partner doubled, and his RHO passed. If the double was artificial, there would be a (!) or (\*) to the right of it.

It helps when the auction is laid out vertically. In this way every row is understood to be a round of bidding. For example,

1♠ (P) 2♣ (P)

2N (P) 3♣ (P)

Occasionally, when people want to refer to a type of auction, an x is put in place of the suit strain as a placeholder. So the auction

1x P P ?

Indicates “LHO opens 1 of something, partner passes, RHO passes, and it’s your bid.”

Similar placeholders include:

1y

1z (or any letter for that matter)

1any

2new (signifying a new suit at the two level)

Additionally, sometimes bids are termed with regard to their relative “distance” from another bid. Take the auction 1♠ (P) 2♠ (P). Instead of saying

2N Balanced G/T

3♣ 4+♣

3♦ 4+♦

The author might notate these bids as

+1 Balanced G/T

+2 4+♣

+3 4+♦

Notice that the +# is always within reference to the same bid (in this case, 2♠, the last bid). This is particularly useful when describing bidding patterns (most importantly for relay auctions).

1. Slang/Terminology

Following is a collective dictionary of the common slang spoken in bridge clubs globally.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 6-Bagger | A 6 card suit; similarly named for longer suits |
| Ace-King-Queen 7th | A holding of seven cards headed by the A, K, and Q; similarly named for other suits |
| Alpaca | A (6322) hand pattern |
| Amber | Both Vulnerable |
| Baby Cub | A (32)4-4 hand pattern |
| Bad Assassin | A (5422) pattern with two aces |
| Bear | A 4-4(32) hand pattern |
| Beaver | A redouble |
| Beer Card  | ♦7 |
| Broderick | T4 doubleton in a suit |
| Bullet  | An Ace |
| Bust  | A bad hand |
| CHO | Your partner |
| Cold (Icy, Frigid, Lock) | The contract is unbeatable, or very close to unbeatable |
| Crab | A three |
| Curse of Scotland  | ♦9 |
| Dental Pain | A slam played in a partscore |
| Devil’s Bedposts | ♣4 |
| Dog | A terrible hand |
| Doubleton | Two cards in a suit |
| Duck  | To refuse to take a trick;  |
| Ducks and Eggs | A score of 2200 |
| Event Time | Scores of 530 or 730 |
| Fish | To maneuver play in hopes of getting certain cards out |
| Friedlander | Q9 doubleton |
| Gang Splinter | A hand with two singletons |
| Green | Opponent’s Vulnerable |
| Hammered  | Doubled |
| Hog | A player who tries to declare a lot, often by bidding NT early in the auction |
| Hook  | To Finesse |
| In the Pocket (In the Slot, Onside) | When a card is positioned favorably, usually with regard to a finesse |
| Kingleton | A singleton King |
| KQ Frozen  | KQ by itself |
| Lefty (LHO) | Your Left Hand Opponent |
| Marriage  | KQ in a suit |
| Monkey  | A score of 500 |
| Moose | A hand with a lot of high cards in all suits |
| Nativity Scene | A hand with three kings |
| Pancake (Flat, Round, Koala) | (4333) hand type |
| Pig’s Eye | ♦A |
| Quack | A Queen or Jack, usually determined worthless in the bidding or play |
| Quiff | A singleton Queen |
| Rattlesnake (Mongoose, Rhinocerous) | (4441) hand type |
| Red | Opponent’s Not Vulnerable |
| Rewhacked | Redoubled |
| Righty (RHO)  | Your Right Hand Opponent |
| Scratch | To win some amount of masterpoints; typically an insignificant amount |
| Sidewalk | A hand with at most 0-3 jacks and nothing else |
| Singleton | One card in a suit |
| Small | A low card deemed insignificant |
| Snowman  | 8  |
| Spanish Gentleman  | A one trick set |
| Sticks and Wheels  | A score of 1100 |
| Stiff (Alone, Bare) | Singleton |
| Striped Tail Ape Double/Redouble | A penalty double of a contract made in hopes that a slam isn’t bid OR to scare the opponents into a less successful strain. |
| Swan  | A (7411) hand pattern |
| Telephone # | Being set by 1100+  |
| The hard way | Achieving a normal looking score through unusual contracts |
| Tight | Alone in a suit; KQ by itself is “KQ tight” |
| Tripleton | Three cards in a suit |
| Turkey (Fish, Quack) | A bad bridge player |
| Underalls | The places just under the winner’s circle |
| Void (Chicane) | No cards in a suit |
| Walking the Dog | Intentionally underbidding with a good hand; usually in hopes of buying a doubled contract |
| Westmagic | A 4-4-3-2 hand |
| Whacked (Axed, Hit) | Doubled |
| White (Love All) | None Vulnerable |
| Yarborough | A hand with no card higher than a 9 |
|  |  |

Don’t worry, there’s even more to come!